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## Letter From the Editor:

I would like to thank everyone who has worked with the Circle this past year. Thanks to your art, writing and other contributions, the 1999-2000 Circle has been outstanding. I hope that future Circle staffs and readers will continue to strive to make this magazine a source of pride for Auburn University students. I hope that the Circle readers will continue to show the support you have shown me to next year's editor, Camie Young. As I am about to embark on my biggest personal journey yet, I wish all of you a bright and happy future.

Sincerely, Stephanie Wilson, Editor Class of 2000

The Auburn Circle welcomes and encourages work from students, staff, faculty and alumni of Auburn University. Please submit poetry, fiction and non-fiction work in a typewritten format, if possible. All art work should be submitted as a finished photograph, color or black and white. Submissions will be returned upon request.

The Circle is a community publication financed through Student Activity fees. The views presented do not reflect the views of the University, or the Board of Student Communications. Please send all comments, submissions and letters to the editor to:

The Auburn Circle
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"Sojourn to Verbena" Virginia Terry

# Ready for Peace

# Melanie Richburg

We cut the rope that joined

Our hearts together-

We lasted not even eleven months --

Instead of forever.

We had our highs and lows —

No one can live in a pendulum relationship.

I can't handle the stress,

Pressure and arguments.

Now I feel peace.

I'm no longer crying,

Nor am Tunnerved or arguing constantly.

We should move on and carry

Our memories in a sack happily.

Now we can feel peace.

### Ten

#### Meredith Coolidge

It was weird the way it happened. Almost every night for the past three months, my mom and dad had locked themselves in our living room. I didn't know what they were doing in there and I didn't try to find out, for fear of finding out, but every once in a while, I'd hear them shout at each other. Then one day my dad didn't come home from work. I didn't cry or anything, though—it was just weird.

I was ten—it was September and I had just started the fifth grade, right after getting back from the camp my parents had sent me to while they were separated, unbeknownst to me until after my dad moved out.

Fifth grade—that was the year I got my period for the first time. I was the first one and I never told anybody until seventh grade, when everyone else got theirs. That was the year all of that friend-switching stuff started, and when we first realized that the boys were actually kind-of cute, and maybe not so annoying after all.

It was in December when it all started. My father is a free spirit, probably because he grew up in Cleveland, in a mansion with servants and drivers and all of that. When he crashed his Porsche in college, his parents bought him another one. Once he made it through an MBA program, he had to fight off all of the job offers that came his way, and it seemed like all he had to do was sit at his desk and stare at the wall and he got promoted over and over again He told me it was the name—everyone knew it, everyone valued it, everyone wanted it—back then when a name still mattered.

In December, my father got tired of commuting three hours a day from our house in Connecticut to his job in Manhattan and he got tired of wearing a tie—"too restricting" he said. So, he quit. He thought he was invincible. So did I.

A week later, Dad poured all of our

money into three hair salons that he bought, where the stylists charged ten dollars per customer and had nicknames on their stations like "Twiggy" and "Skipper."

In August, my dad closed his stores, and his checkbook was ten million dollars short.

I was at the Interness Camp in Michigan when Dad's business started its spontaneous combustion, along with my parents' marriage. It was a music and arts camp, two activities which repulsed me, in part, because I sucked at both. We had to wear navy blue corduroy knickers and button-down shirts with knee socks, pulled up. It lasted for two months and it was the first time I'd ever been away from home for more than one night. We took art classes and learned to make paper and clay whistles, sang in the choir, and for an hour every night after dinner, they locked us in five-by-five foot windowless, concrete cubicles with one metal chair and a music stand where we were supposed to practice our respective instruments. I played the oboe that summer, and after two months, much to the chagrin of my hairy-eared instructor, I still couldn't get it to do anything other than squawk out the first line of "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star." I only showered once every other week, just for effect, because the urine-scented bathroom was so grimy, it made me feel even more dirt-encrusted when I left it than when I came in. Subsequently, I came home with a severe case of ring-around-the-collar and Impetigo. I hated my parents for that, especially when they came for Parent's Day, acting like they had been living in the same house for the past month when they hadn't, and I begged them with everything I had to take me home. I cried so hard when they left that I made myself throw

I guess my dad moved back into our house right before I got back to

keep their charade going, but he was sleeping on the couch every night—he said the bed gave him back problems.

On the night before school started, I got my period, the one that came before everyone else's. I didn't know what it was or where it was coming from because my mom had never told me about it. I was often informed of things by my parents after the fact. I slept on the couch with my dad that night because I was scared I would die in my sleep from excessive blood loss. That was the last time I ever felt like a little girl. I could feel something sad hanging in the air of that living room, and

I imagined the ceiling fan swirling it around, churning it up and forcing the air up my nostrils whether I wanted to breathe it in or not.

Nothing bad ever happened in Brunswick Park. If it did, none of us knew about it, and no one ever talked about it.

Things at school the next

day were different from last year, too. The girls were giggling about how tanned and tall the boys got over the summer, and the boys talked about the boobs we'd grown. I was in the "in" crowd—an exclusive group of six girls and six boys—and we will probably all end up on a daytime talk show in our thirties, being confronted by all of the kids whose self-esteems we ruined. Four of "our" girls—Margaret, Anna, Kelly and I set up a movie date with four of "our" boys for the next day after school. I got the guy that everyone else wanted- Mark Blumenstein. Margaret, Anna, Kelly, and I spent that whole night on conference call, talking about what we'd wear on our first date and whether we thought the boys would put their arms around us in the theatre.

The town I lived in, population about 4,500, was often referred to as the "Beverly Hills of the East Coast." Money did real- by grow on trees in Brunswick Park. In

high school, we would follow David Letterman's cherry red Ferrari down route seven because we knew he'd eventually get angry and flip us off. The guy who played Willy Wonka—Gene somebody—often sat and watched people go in and out of the theater, growling at his own dog. The town was virtually built from gold nuggets, but no one ever stopped to notice that it bore a green patina, like cheap Mexican silver, and never shined as bright as real gold. Nothing bad ever happened in Brunswick Park. If it did, none of us knew about it, and no one ever talked about it. Every store was locally owned, by mandate of a nofranchise law, so I could charge anything, anywhere, to my mother's store credit. You could walk from one side of town to the other in thirty minutes, and the kids rode their bikes to school every day. No one in Brunswick Park was divorced—they all just cheated on each other "for the kids' sake." including my father. It was a dollhouse world, where the plaster walls threatened to crumble at any minute, and plastic, movable-arms mommy was always at home baking cookies. Life was a game of pretend, especially for the adults. It's so easy to hide behind money. I was -always happy—I always smiled, so much that people commented on it.

We rode our bikes, all eight of us, downtown after school. We bought candy on our parents' credit at Vandum's Pharmacy and hung out next to Gene Somebody on the benches for an hour. Mark Blumenstein chased me down the street when I stole the hat off his head, a prepubescent method of flirtation. I was elated.

I couldn't remember the movie we went to for a million dollars because I was still marveling that the cutest boy at Brunswick Park Elementary School was holding my buttery hand inside of the popcorn box. I talked to Mark Blumenstein on the phone every night that week, until the next Monday.

Anyone who was anybody, or whose parents were anybody, took ballroom dancing in fifth grade at the Walter Clark School of Dance. The boys picked the girls. I didn't even join the conversation that night with the giggling gaggle of my girlfriends about who would pick them—I already knew—I was "taken." The instructor commented on how bright my smile was, which made my heart skip because I thought that meant I was in love. Sometime, while I was making sure my hunter green skirt twirled perfectly around my legs, Mark Blumenstein chose Kelly to be his partner. She informed me after class that Mark was her boyfriend, he thought I was a bitch, and she did too. Kelly had been my best friend since pre-school when we got in trouble for eating sand out of the sandbox.

I waited outside for thirty minutes after the other kids, the instructors, and Walter Clark had left, watching in the direction my mom's car would have come from, waiting to see the familiar round headlights of her Mercedes.

I walked home slowly, dragging my feet in the piles of leaves along the side of the road. The sun was setting over the trees and the light that remained bounced off the yellows and oranges of the leaves and made the white of the skinny, naked birch trees more pronounced, the perfect painting of what draws people to small towns in New England. I always loved when the leaves fit up the woods in the fall, when change was everywhere you looked, when change was change only for the sake of changing, when change was something good. That night, I wanted it to be spring or winter or the time when Mom and Dad slept in the same bed, and friends just wanted to swim with you or go ice skating, and boys were riddled with cooties, and I didn't have to shave my legs. I wanted it to be anything, anytime, other than the one that was.

I heard thunder in the distance and

quickened my step as the scream of lightning made its way across the almost-dark sky. I thought about how much it hurt when friends no longer cared and how bad it felt to be lonely and alone. I thought about how my mom and dad always made me feel better— they would make me breakfast for dinner and my dad told goofy stories with voices until I laughed in spite of myself I wanted that now, even though they hadn't done that for years—I hadn't needed it for years—and I started to run with the adrenaline of excited childhood anticipation. It started to rain when I got to the end of my street. Within seconds after I felt the first drop, I was soaked and dripping.

My mom was sitting in the driveway, in the rain, with her face in her hands. My dad's Jeep wasn't in the driveway, where it always was after six-thirty. It was eight. I looked at my mother for what seemed like forever until she looked up at me with red, glazed-over eyes. The sun dropped behind the trees and the outside lights turned themselves on, giving a jaundiced glow to my mother's skin.

"Dad's not coming home is he?" I asked her, like someone had told me, like I already knew, or had known all along. She looked at me like she didn't even recognize me, like she had to jog her memory to recall why I was there. I didn't ask guestions. I didn't cry. All I felt was tired - the kind of tired where you can barely stand up and your eyes feel like rubber cement. Mom stayed in her room that night. I slept on the floor outside of her door, listening to her breathe, because when I had gone into my room, I had felt an unexpected, overwhelming hatred for my dolls, and pink ruffles and flowers, and my stuffed animals. I hated them like they weren't even mine, like they had invaded my space, like they were in my way, like suddenly, I was too old for them. It took a long time before someone commented on my 7 smile again after that.

### Students Visit Quite Often

David Sutton

I work with my office door open
So in they wander
Like sheep through a neglected gate
They flop in a chair
And start chattering away
On topics of no depth or import
And then disgorge something painful
"My ex-boyfriend is stalking me" or
"My doctor found a tumor" or
"My parents are getting a divorce"
Their psyches relieved
They exit saying
"Thanks for listening"

I have become an incidental collector
Of psychological bric-a-brac
Defunct hobgoblins and bugaboos
Parasites without a host
Inert, static, fossilized
I keep them on my bookshelf
Next to Aristotle, Cicero,
Foucault, and Kenneth Burke
From their perch
They peer down at me
With stone-faced glare
While dust gathers on
Their misshapen brows

### Tag Tanyi Shah

Spring remains now as only a distant memory,

just like the leaves that are crushed beneath their feet, as they run through the greening grass

playing that child's game, where a touch turns you into the enemy. As the season changes, so the touch turns sweet

and they share promises in the summer breeze under a blossoming tree. Autumn sets a new canvas

against the bright, orange sky, one of an older love that flourishes through bonds never questioned for depth.

They walk in the crisp air, their wrinkled hands entwined, into a cold and desolating winter that is as enveloping as the fire that warms them at night when he

touches her face and she remembers the spring of long ago.

and spring comes again bringing visitors with flowers to both of their beds, side by side in earth, as they were destined to be in that child's game.

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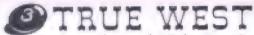




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"Flow" Christy Burgess

#### He Never Promised Her a Rose Garden

Erica Parsons

She had to leave the letter today. She had written and rewritten this letter at least a hundred times over the last fifteen years, but somehow she had never been able to summon enough courage to deliver it. It had to be perfect; it had to say everything, but it had to be final. And it had to be left, for him today.

Placing the seated envelope gingerly on the comer of the table, she adjusted her veil and straightened the front of her gown. She had dismissed her bridesmaids, explaining that she wanted a few minutes alone before the ceremony began. She could hear the guests in the lobby laughing and talking in subdued tones and she wondered if any of them realized that the anniversary was a week ago today. Fifteen years and one week ago today. She could hardly believe that so much time had gone by. She had graduated from high school then college, then law school. She had dated, loved, lost, learned, grown, changed in fifteen years, but she had never forgotten. And now as she stared blankly at her own reflection in the full-length mirror, the image of the bride-to-be faded and a vision of a little twelve-year old girl in a light blue Sunday dress appeared opposite her in the glass.

"But he said he was going to go with me to the Luau. He promised." She wasn't crying. She never really cried, not even as a baby. But her words were broken and she could hardly seem to stand the weight of her own skin. She kept fidgeting. She felt as if a thousand eyes were watching her, waiting for the great break-down that was inevitable. After all, she was only twelve. She couldn't have acquired the fine art of emotional restraint in so few years. But still she stood by, dry-eyed and stone-faced except for the look of utter disbelief that furrowed her little blonde brows.

Written in fond remembrance of Adam Wolfe

"Honey," her mother began, but left the would-be words of comfort unspoken. It wasn't possible for her to understand the struggle that was raging inside the child despite her longing to, the feelings of betrayal and abandonment mixed with a love and devotion to her little friend that could not be dismissed with a simple consoling phrase. Besides there were no words for this, nothing can be said to a girl trapped somewhere between dolls and dates as she stands over the coffin of her dearest friend. And her mother knew this. "Let's go back to the car," was as appropriate a suggestion as any other, since the words never made it through the child's own thoughts anyway.

"But he promised," she whispered, barely audible. She staggered forward as if she had not quite awakened that morning. One last look; maybe she had been mistaken. Maybe this was just all some catastrophic mistake and if she looked again it wouldn't be Adam's body in the box all dressed up in that dark blue suit that he hated. His white- blonde hair wouldn't be combed nicely across his forehead as he lay with hands folded in prayer over his chest. No, it would be some other boy, or man maybe. Because it made sense that old people died. She looked again.

She looked again and the image of the little girl faded. She checked the flowers in her hair and the polish on her nails. She adjusted the garter. Glancing up at the clock, Still a half an hour to go. She cautiously removed one small white rose from a dozen that stood proudly in a vase, a token of affection from her loving beau, and gazed at it for a long moment. The petals were soft and cool as she caressed them, letting her mind wander back to the scene from so long ago.

She looked again, but the face in the box didn't change; the suit was the same shiny blue and his hair had never looked so neat and clean. Also lying in the coffin were his baseball glove and some old pictures of him in his uniform. She hated baseball season because it meant that he would have less 13 time to ride bikes and

catch bugs with her. She felt a hand on her shoulder while she stood, scrutinizing the boy that seemed to be only sleeping. "It's not him, you know. It's not Adam." His mother stood clasping a framed photograph taken only a few weeks before, and suddenly there he was in full-glossed color, grinning and holding the bat as if ready for the next pitch. "This is Adam. This is my son."

"I know. I remember."

"He's terrific on first base. And he hit four out last season."

"I know." She couldn't understand why Mrs. Woolf kept referring to him in the present tense. When people die, that changes. Everything reverts to past; simple grammatical rule. Grown-ups were supposed to know those things. She looked at Mrs. Woolf and wondered who had helped her get dressed this morning. Her usually neat hairstyle was slightly frazzled and her make-up looked as if it had been applied in the dark. There were bags under her glazed eyes and a distant smile was plastered across her lips. "Mrs. Woolf, I'm sorry I didn't make it to the last game. If I had known..." but she couldn't finish. She could see the blank look in his mother's eyes and she knew that her words weren't getting through. She smiled gently at the sedated woman and slipped into the pew.

She sat stoned faced

alongside her sniveling classmates during the service. I wish Adam was here so I'd have somebody to play tic-tac-toe with. He'd be bored too right now if he had to sit through this. But she sat perfectly still with her hands folded as she had seen his, and tried not to breathe. She tried to imagine what it must be like for him to have to lie so quietly. She didn't think he was enjoying it very much. The minister concluded with some eloguent words about Adam joining God in Heaven and all the angels rejoicing. As the organ began to moan, the guests filed out of the chapel and down to the graveside. A few more hymns were sung and verses read. Then Mr. Woolf stood and faced the assembly, thanking them for their love and support. He announced that if anyone wished to take a flower from the arrangement on the coffin, to please do so, to take a small reminder of how beautiful Adam's life had been. She watched as her classmates each pulled a bud from the oversized bouquet, and she felt her mother gently urge her forward. She didn't want a flower; she wanted her best friend. But he was gone, and so a small white rosebud would have to preserve his memory. She reached in and chose one that had nestled itself among the greenery, almost hidden but peeking its head out just enough to catch her eye.

She gazed down at the

rose she held in her manicured hand today. He would have been here. She had imaged him by her side many times in those fifteen years - at that Luau, at graduation, at fraternity parties, at commencement - but never had his presence been so dearly missed as it was today. She drew a deep breath and tried to focus her thoughts on the vows she had written and would be required to recite in a little while. Her new best friend would be waiting at the alter to exchange lifetime promises and she wanted desperately to get them right. She needed these promises to stick. She needed to put the broken promises from so many years ago behind her.

"He promised he would go with me. The sixth grade Luau is tonight. I don't want to go with anyone else. I hate all the other boys in the class."

"I know, honey. But things happen sometimes..." "So what?"

"You don't have to go. Maybe it would be better if you just stayed home and..." the chiming of the doorbell interrupted her mother mid-advice. She stood glaring at the floor, not listening to the voices in the hallway. Her mother returned a few moments later, bearing a bouquet of beautiful budding white roses. "These came for you," she said, looking inquisitively at the blooms. "There's a card," she said as she handed the flowers and the miniature

card to her daughter.

"'Roses are white,
Violets are blue,
We'll have fun at this
thing tonight

Cuz I promised you. "
She recognized Adam's scrawl
on the little card. He must have
ordered them the week before.
He knew white roses were her
favorite.

"Who are they from?" The little girl stood trembling, clutching the card so tightly that her knuckles began to whiten. She read the verses again, thinking for an instant that maybe everything had been a bad dream. Maybe he was on his way to her house right at that moment and that all the rest of the day's events had just been something she had ... but she knew. She knew the truth, and it knocked her to the floor. She held his card to her chest and rocked back and forth, the silent sobs violently twisting her insides. She didn't want his flowers or his cards or his promises. She wanted him.

She wanted him. She wished he could have been there today, to calm her jitters and to give his approval. She sighed and placed the rose back in the vase. Fifteen minutes. She turned back to the letter she had

laid on the table, the final draft. It had been so carefully constructed: each word echoed the sentiments of the last fifteen vears. She had tried to capture every memory of him in those lines, both the memories that he was a part of and those that he had missed. She had explained everything so thoroughly, down to the details of today. She had purposely chosen this church for the wedding because he was buried in its cemetery. It was the only way that she could think of to have him here and to leave him here. It was time to move on, to let him go and let someone else in. She stared for a moment at the script on the envelope, Adam. Slipping out of her heels and out the side door, she crossed the lush green of the yard to the small plot in the comer. Her breathing was shallow and her pulse raced as she fingered the lettering on the headstone, Adam. With a trembling hand, she laid the letter against the marble. "I just came to say good-bye," she whispered, wiping away the last tear she would shed over his memory.

She stood slowly, and then crossed the yard again, never looking back. When she opened the door, she could hear the piano beginning and she knew it was time. She replaced her shoes, gathered her dress, and raised her head as she passed her reflection once more. Lifting one diamond- adorned hand to the glass, she hoped the hand of the little girl in the blue dress would meet hers. But it didn't. It was her own, grown hand that rose in the mirror to brush against her fingertips and she turned away. It's over, the little girl in the blue dress and her playmate were gone. As she stepped from the small room she knew she had left those unfulfilled promises from so long ago to sleep with her memories and her friend in the yard outside. There were real promises to be kept this time, promises that couldn't wait any longer. Closing the door behind her, she gave over the last fifteen years of accustomed skepticism and drew a sharp breath. This man now waiting only a few yards away, this new best friend, had offered her the promise of escape from the ones that had held her until today. Until this moment. She stepped forward into the chapel; she had her own promises to keep.



"Untitled" Virginia Terry

### **What Really Matters**

Melanie Richburg

Society places emphasis
On physical appearances.
It doesn't really matter
If you are thinner or fatter.
Maybe your eyes are too close together,
Or your hair is thin like a feather.
What really matters is what is inside
And all the things in which you abide.



"Cut"
Jon Davis

#### WALLPAPER MANDY TRAN

TOO MANY WARS

TOO MANY WARS AND HUNGRY WOMEN

TOO MANY DYING CHILDREN WITH BELLIES FULL OF WORMS.

TOO MANY COCKROACHES IN MY ROOM

TOO MANY AMERICANS THROWING AWAY PLATES FULL OF BREAD AND MEAT

TOO MANY BONY SHADOWS OF CHILDREN DEAD ALREADY AS A MAN STEALS HIS BAG OF DRY RICE FROM HIS HAND

TOO MANY TEARS UNSHED.

TOO MANY AMUSEMENT PARKS AND MALLS AND WHAT IS THIS PLACE WE CALL OUR UNIVERSITY?

AN INTELLECTUAL UTOPIA GONE ROTTEN AND WASTED AND WE FORGET ABOUT THE

MANY SATIRICAL POEMS WRITTEN MAINLY ABOUT US

AND WE DON'T REALIZE THAT WE ARE THE CULPRIT WHEN WE LAUGH AT THEM

AND THE SHAME OF THE BODIES OF WOMEN RAPED AND BATTERED FOR LACK OF REASON AND THAT IS THEIR REALITY, IT IS A WORLD FAR REMOVED FROM MY PLANE OF EXISTENCE

WE ARE THE CHILDREN OF GOD? WE ARE THE PERFECTIONS OF LOVE?

NUCLEAR WAR, A WORD NUMBED BY MEDIA HYPE

LIFE IN GENERAL IS A HOLLYWOOD SHOW

THAT HAS A COMFORTING NUMBING EFFECT OF LITTLE CONSEQUENCES ON OUR EXISTENCE AND IN AFFECT...

WE END DRAMATICALLY LIKE AN OSCAR AWARD WINNER

YOUNG BOYS DRINK AWAY, BECAUSE YOUR LIVES WILL BE MEANINGLESS

AND I AM TOO WEAK TO DO ANYMORE FOR YOU

AND I AM TOO WEAK TO CRY ANYMORE FOR YOU

AND IF ONLY I COULD STEAL A MEAL FOR YOU

AND IF ONLY I COULD LOVE YOU

IF ONLY I COULD CLOSE MY EYES AWAY FROM THE IRONY FOR YOU

IF ONLY WE WERE NEVER SO AWFUL

BUT I AM TOO WEAK TO DO ANYMORE

AND TOO MUCH OF A COWARD TO CHANGE THINGS

YOU ARE TOO FAR AWAY FOR ME TO TOUCH AND SOOTH YOUR PAIN

THERE IS NO USE IN PRAYING

WHAT I NEED NOW IS A CIGARETTE.



"Untitled" Julie Morris



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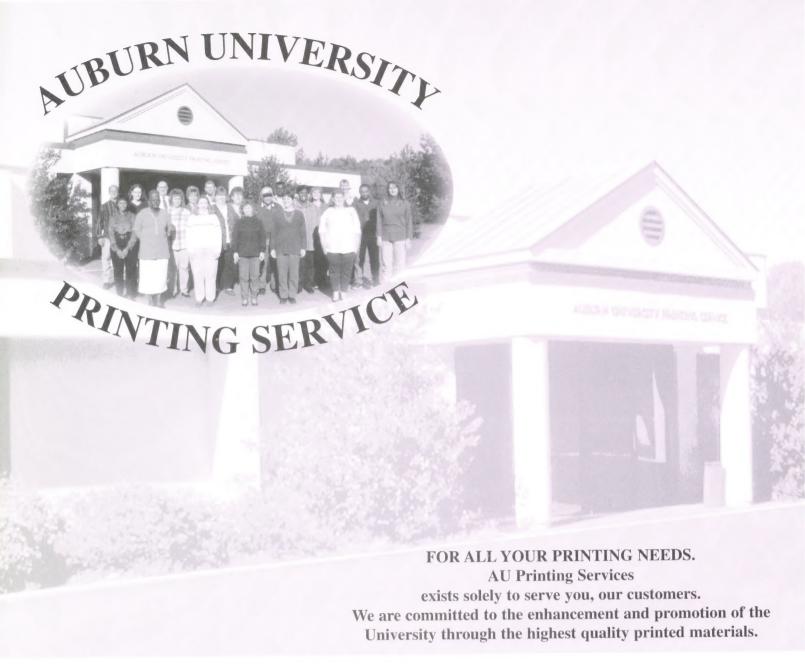
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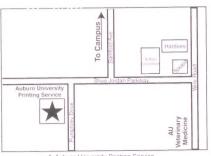


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